

# A Turn to the Planet Literature, Diversity, and Totality

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In 1983, seventeen years ago, I was here in Seoul by the generous invitation of the International Cultural Society of Korea. The occasion was a conference on East Asian literature, a topic that is not too different from the one assigned to me for this presentation. I met professor Uchang Kim for the first time and have benefited a great deal since from my friendship with him. I am indeed grateful to him and other organizers for bringing me here once again.

## 1 Literary Studies in 1983

Seventeen years may not be a long time in a normal phase of history. Between 1715 and 1732, for example, or even between 1918 and 1935, the change was certainly not trifling, but still the sense of continuation was quite solid. The difference between 1983 and 2000, however, has been so immense that not only can we barely grasp the magnitude of changes and transformations between the two terminals, but the phrase like a "normal phase of history" is itself beginning to lose meaning. It looks as if we were heading toward a future where the pace of change will only accelerate and to such an extent that the trace of history may be erased as time hurries along through our everyday life. Thus, first, I'd like to recall the ideas that were crucial in 1983, or that I considered significant then, as recorded in the article printed in the proceedings of the 1983 conference, and second, to set these thoughts against what seems crucial now and reflect on the intervening events. It might also reveal what has survived unchanged and suggest what may remain intact in the future. I will of course be talking about the changes and continuities inside what's known to be literature, but also those outside of it, since the two are indivisible in the long confluence of history.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the impact of Edward Said's Orientalism, published in 1978, had spread far beyond its immediate range of the Middle East and cultural history. His Nietzschean and Foucauldian message on the genealogy of the concepts of power and learning was generalized in the discourse of modern history. Orientalism radically challenged the orthodoxy in disciplines like history, anthropology, geography, and sociology as well as literary criticism, as everyone knows. Many branches of the humanities and social sciences had been formed during the colonial period with unexamined assumptions of the centrality of European and North American civilization, and the emergent intellectuals in the just liberated former colonized world found in Said's criticism something both revolutionary and fundamental for mapping the history and geography of the future. The term "Orientalism" was added to the vocabulary of many languages as a name for the hegemonic ideology of domination. This was to be the beginning of a new paradigm for equality and the open mind. In the context of the dominant practice of the Eurocentric formulation of knowledge, however, the anti-Orientalist criticism was looked on as a disturbing stand. To the academic establishment, it was a movement of rebellion and resistance—at least at the initial stage.

In the East Asian field, which had been long organized from the colonial perspective, Said's criticism was not accepted at once, especially among the older established scholars. Critical categories, transferred from European literature to East Asian without scrutinizing their precise applicability, were still very much in use. Genre, form, structure, periodicity (such as "modernity" and "modernization"), intentionality, affect, authorship, audience, textuality, media, the idea of "literature" itself, and many other fundamental literary notions, the terms used in describing and analyzing European literature(s), were more or less randomly chosen as approximations. Even in the 1983 conference here, there were sharp divisions and disagreements among the panelists on the merit of the newly proposed transvaluation. Here I should speak for myself in order to avoid misrepresenting other scholars.

As I reread my contribution, "Against the Native Grain: Reading the Japanese Novel in America," I am reminded of several events both personal and critical that took place around the time. I came to know Edward Said well, while he was finishing the final manuscript of Orientalism at Stanford, and I was in Berkeley writing my book As We Saw Them published in 1979. I am not comparing my book to Edward's here: mine is a modest analysis of a cultural encounter, narrativized and ironic, whereas Orientalism is theoretical and oppositional, that is, both philosophical and political. I was stunned by the force of his opposition that fundamentally challenged the liberal tenet, from which I had not been able to quite extricate myself despite my deepening disillusionment with academic intellectualism and liberalism. Said's oppositionism was different from Foucault's in refusing to universalize power and neutralize justice. It made a deeper impact on me, furthermore, as I joined him in various programs concerning the Palestinian struggle for survival against Israel, including repeated visits to the West Bank and Tunis at his request in the 1980s. To the extent that I agreed with him on the matter of power and resistance, I was fully prepared to follow Said in viewing Japanese literature vis-à-vis Eurocentricity. Of course, I think I attempted a similar project of transvaluation with As We Saw Them, as the title implied with its ironic coequality of "we" and "they." Except that mine was more distant, not fired with resistance and opposition in which Said was unavoidably and passionately engaged. The contribution I made in the 1983 Seoul conference here was in a way my first explicit statement in an act of resistance, which has lasted to this day under changing circumstances.

In 1983 my interest was far more literary than now. The problems I saw in the novel were within the literary context in literary terms, although these problems and terms nearly always referred to the external historical developments. I chose the prose narrative fiction as the crucial foci of comparison and confrontation among cultures of the world. Poetry and drama trace back to antiquity everywhere before the diverse economic and industrial developments sundered the world into haves and have-nots, while the "novel," or rather prose narrative fiction—of considerable length, printed and mass-circulated, describing the actions and events of the ordinary people—emerged after industrialization and colonialism widened the gap. (Eric Hobsbaum and David Landes agree in estimating the gap in wealth among the nations as in one digit until 1900 or later, and it widened to two digits, and then to three digits only in very recent years. The gap is far wider now between the richest and the poorest, both between nations and within nations.) As I saw it, the prose fiction form reveals this history's engagement with art far more clearly than poetry and drama, enabling me to avoid cultural essentialism. On the

other hand, if we place the prose narrative forms of various countries within one category of the novel, we are likely to overlook different formal features inscribed by the historical variants in development and power. Difference, in this view, was the way to liberation.

In the 1983 paper I discussed the shosetsu, the modern Japanese narrative form, as having features that refuse to be classified under the same headings as in the western novel. Just to take one instance, because of the “aspect,” the temporal grammatical category of the Japanese language, the perfect and imperfect rather than past, present, and future tenses as in English, the narrative sequence tends to be sequential rather than consequential, discouraging the causal linking of narrative elements. Here what Roland Barthes in Writing Degree Zero ascribes to the preterit or the historical past tense, that is, the abstraction of “a pure verbal act from the multiplicity of experiences” is not available. The shosetsu thus tends to be paratactic instead of syntactic, resulting in weakened and loosened, or freer and open-ended, plotting. Similarly, the absence of the genesis and apocalypse myths leads to the rejection of a clear beginning and, more important, a clear ending, resolution. A narrative continues on and on, at times refusing the possibility of closure altogether. Even these broad temporal and sequential categories alone seem to indicate that the difference that lies between the novel and the shosetsu is indeed considerable.

My intention here is not to re-present a 17-year old paper, but to suggest its position so that I can both recall and ponder the changes that have taken place in these intervening years. So let me briefly go over just one more feature that seems crucial to my over-all argument here. This difference between the novel and the shosetsu at their high modernist/modernizing stages—from late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth—might be explained by the marked residual features of orality in the shosetsu. I do not mean, of course, that the shosetsu is still an oral performance. It is not; it is a printed narrative just like any novel. And yet even in its printed form, the shosetsu retains many features of orality. While the modern novel is marked by invention, particularistic landscape, revision, analysis, spatiality, distance, comprehension, expansion, massive length, sculpturesque textual autonomy, and the depth and interiority in characterization, the oral narrative is characterized by memory, formulas, repetition, display, temporality, proximity and intimacy, insularity, ritualism, episodic brevity and fragmentation, contextual communality, and social roles/relations of characters. Literacy requires the infrastructure of printing, distribution, and leisure and wealth, whereas orality depends on village or other communal space and physical places where the recitor and audience can assemble together. Such intimate sites have either vanished or been replaced by mechanical reproductions like radio or television from the literate industrial societies. So considered, it may not be greatly amiss to call literacy a central cultural marker of capitalist, metropolitan, colonial societies, while orality, that of agricultural, peripheral, colonized societies.

I hasten to add that I do not mean to differentiate literacy and orality as one capable, and the other incapable, of analytic and abstract speculation, as do Jack Goody and Ian Watt, or as one pacific and innocent and the other as violent and aggressive, as argued by Levi-Strauss and Walter Ong. Nor do I agree with Jacques Derrida, Brian Street, and Roger Chartier who insist orality and literacy are ultimately indistinguishable. A given society as a whole is always endowed with a mixture of orality and literacy (and here I agree with Derrida, Street, and Chartier), but the two activities are distinguishable

in the manner and circumstance of communication. Furthermore, the use made of literacy is different between metropolitan societies and peripheral societies. Let me repeat, however, that orality does not evolve into literacy along the axis of progress, nor is orality prelapsarian innocence doomed by literacy. They are two different speech acts, which variously develop in the manifold conditions of history. The qualitative superiority or inferiority of the two is meaningless, as are the relative merits of the novel and shosetsu forms. I was, in other words, set to prove that the critical terms that were the products of one did not fit the products of the other. This, in retrospect, was my attempt to liberate the shosetsu and other peripheral narrative forms such as the Chinese, Arab, or Urdu narratives from the metropolitan literary domination.

I liked to indulge myself by fantasizing that the novel as a written text was fit for distribution over great distances, thus particularly suitable, unlike the oral recitation, for the writer in the metropolis to send out to the colonies far away—just like an emissary or a command from the colonial office to a viceroy or a governor in the far-flung corners of the world. I was convinced that the novel was inescapably colonialist—even with an anti-colonialist theme. Oppositionism in my literary revisionism, however, had to be considerably curtailed in considering the shosetsu form because of Japan's peculiar place in the history of colonialism. It is indisputable, on the one hand, that Japan was faced with the Euro American hegemony and adventurism since the mid-nineteenth century. Although military aggression was highly unlikely, economic and political containment of Japan in the hand of the U.S. and European powers was as comprehensive as any other Asian nations. Even more importantly, Euro American cultural indifference to Japan was both disturbing and incomprehensible to its intellectuals who were thoroughly familiar with Enlightenment universalism. By the 1930s, far earlier than American critics, Kuki Shuzo, Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, and other Japanese writers sought out Heidegger and Jaspers and when they found the German philosophers were both ignorant and indifferent to their country, their disappointment was profound. Their construction of a nationalist philosophical system that eventually served to be an apologia for Japan's aggression can be traced to such an experience of Eurocentricity. On the other hand, Japan was the first non-Western country that developed indigenous imperialism. Taking to heart the advice given by Bismarck and other Western leaders, the Japanese oligarchy and militarists quickly learned the real politik and the instrumentality of colonialism for their industrial development. After the victory with the imperial China and Russia around the turn of the century, their swagger over their intra-Asian domination was unmistakable in the shosetsu of the time not only thematically, but also in the narrative forms the writers were beginning to experiment in time. Said was able to extend the idea of Orientalism to mean political oppression and thereby to take an uncompromisingly anti-Orientalist position in dealing with the questions of Palestine and Islamic countries. My own liberationist revisionism concerning the West and the Rest, however, had to be seriously qualified. It was not allowed to focus on the historical West, but both the West and Japan, that is, the forces of oppression wherever they may have originated. Obviously, presenting the paper near the former colonial governor's headquarters intensified the need to revise my Saidian anti-Orientalism. I should add, however, that I did not quite forget Euro American oppression either.

All this was seventeen years ago.

## 2 Year 2000: Discipline on the Wane

To switch to year 2000, the kinds of literary exercise I have just described are no longer current in the literary critical scene in the United States and in many other countries. First, the sort of grammatical/formal analysis of literary products seems to interest very few scholars now, according to the programs of conferences and meetings as well as books and journals being published now. The idea of literature as composed of autonomous formal inventions survives largely within the guarded walls of few traditionalist enclaves. Gone also is the argument concerning the interrelationships of power among nation-states and national literatures. In fact, the idea of the nation-state is itself very much in decline, not in literary studies alone, of course, but in the intellectual discourse as a whole. If colonialism is talked about, it is often in terms of the era after the colonial rule, within the boundary of the so-called "postcolonial" discourse. Colonialism in this view is safely detached from today's state of affairs. Said's name is replaced by Homi Bhabha's, Stuart Hall's, and Arjun Appadurai's, a changeover signifying the replacement of political economy with culture as a central paradigm. The structure of oppression is explained as a hybrid cultural program in which the subalterns powerfully affect the oppressors' culture as they struggle for survival. By transforming the political-economical into the cultural, the suffering of the oppressed is forgotten. It does not go so far as to convert colonialism into a benign act, but history is certainly looked upon with more leniency and latitude.

As for the decline in literature in general, one can point to the waning of canonic writers and works, established and mainstream scholars, conventional genres, and national literary history. Together with them are interests in foreign cultures, especially European literatures and languages, all visibly disappearing in the last decade. One of the simplest indicators of this radical change is in the recent figures in enrollment, recruitment, and placement at the undergraduate, graduate, and faculty levels in the humanities. Down are the numbers of those enrolled in Russian, Italian, French, and German literatures and languages, conspicuous among the undergraduates but in the graduate programs as well. A sharp decline is evident in the interest in literary studies as a whole. Far fewer undergraduates take courses and major in literature, which means fewer jobs for PhDs and fewer graduate students and seminars. There are faculty members who have been teaching for decades and are still active in research in literary studies, but their classrooms are less crowded now, and fewer copies of their publications circulate.

Even among the disciplines on the wane, however, all is not lost—as yet. There are brisk departments, sections, and sectors even in the general decline. To begin with the most obvious, "theories" seem to have supplanted imaginative works such as the novel, poetry, and drama for the objects of study. Students and young scholars are too impatient to read an infinite number of texts that as they see them are mere materials for analytic statements. Skipping over novels, poems, plays, or historical documents, young—and older—scholars prefer ready-made summaries, abstractions, and analyses that are presumably provided by theorists as the end products of arduous examinations of primary documents. Novels and poems—at least the by-gone works—are no longer being read with unmediated pleasure, an activity which strikes many industrious scholars as indulgent and inefficient. Theories are to the point, and, supposedly, endowed with universal applications. Thus theories are discussed with enthusiasm. In scholarly

publications, graduate seminars and, increasingly also in undergraduate lectures, the knowledge with imaginative texts is no longer presumed; or rather, the students' ignorance is a given. Theories that were born out of a desire for universalism and systematization to redress prejudicial distortion and exclusion are now as commodified as Hollywood films or designers clothes. So what is the theory to theorize, what is the subject?

As has already been mentioned, formal literary autonomy is not a subject that stirs most scholars these days. Literature is now nearly always considered in relation to the extra-literary events and situations in history. What then are the subjects around which theories abstract and construct systems of meanings? They are focused on the interrelationship of social groups: ethnic identities (minoritarian studies such as American-African, Hispanic American, Asian-American, etc.), gender studies (gay, lesbian, queers, and a variety of feminist studies), postcolonial studies (hegemonic/subaltern, diasporan, etc.), local/regional studies, and popular-culture studies, always with emphases on the dominated and marginalized. The nation-state is much too inclusive a notion, and in the current literary discourse it is nearly always divided and subdivided into smaller units. Thus, for instance, the Association of American Studies is not about the U.S. as represented by the hegemonic white male elites, that is, traditional history and society, but has been virtually turned into a scholarly association devoted to the studies of ethnic minorities, suggesting an intense contestation over the subject of history. Under the circumstances, the idea of totality is unsurprisingly taboo, avoided, distrusted, and ignored. Totality and universality, in this view, inevitably suggest repression and exclusion. The new social agenda is to recognize all varieties, incommensurable differences. Such a development toward the principle of "difference," that is, multiculturalism, starting from universalistic centrality is no doubt salutary as long as it rejects the logic of concentrated power and authority, instanced by the world hegemony, Eurocentricity, American imperialism, dictatorship, elitism, male patriarchy, and any other totalizing and normalizing institutionality. Multiculturalism is propelled by the democratic impulse for equality and liberation. Before discussing this democracy of dispersal in literary and cultural scholarship, however, I would like to examine the historical process by which such a change has been enabled since the early 1980s, the time of the International Conference on East Asian Literature.

### 3 A Transnational Planet

To resume the discussion where I left off, Said's criticism was no doubt liberationist, and it gradually began to gain momentum in the 1980s even in the generally conservative East Asian field. There was one development in the 80s, however, that slightly altered the course of anti-Orientalism in the Japan field. By then the net effects of the devastatingly wasteful U.S. adventurism in the 1960s and 70s were beginning to become visible. The trade imbalance was looming larger every year, and Japan was, as it still is, accumulating a huge trade surplus by the mid-80s. The 1985 Plaza Agreement doubled the exchange rate of yen against the dollar for the purpose of curbing Japanese exports to the United States. The U.S. strategy failed. By cutting the cost of labor and the margin of profit, Japan's industry increased its market share throughout the 80s. The mood of protectionism intensified in the U.S., and Japan was portrayed as America's greatest menace threatening to leap from the world's second largest economy to the

world's topmost leader in the twenty-first century. Inside Japan, the sense of confidence and arrogance grew as the unaccustomed affluence replaced the humiliating poverty of the postwar years. The Japanese real estate industry began, very foolishly in retrospect, to buy up American lands and buildings, driving the Americans to a frenzy of patriotism. That was the time when Ezra Vogel of Harvard wrote Japan as Number One ostensibly to warn the smug Americans, but in actuality to flatter the Japanese industry in the hope of serving as its chief apologist for a fee. While the U.S. protectionism sought to stir ugly patriotism, Japan's counter-patriotism was nearly as disturbing. Once again, my criticism of the U.S. hostility had to be tamed by a stricture on Japan's insular nationalism.

There were two far greater developments in the wider context of the entire world in the 80s: the ascendancy of the so-called neo-liberal economy and the end of the Cold War. After the elections of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1980, the U.K. and U.S. accelerated the policy of privatization: denationalization and deregulation of industries, austerity programs, tax cuts on behalf of corporations and the wealthy, and various anti-labor measures. Business took steps to restructure the production process to make industry more efficient and profitable presumably to survive the intensifying competition from Japan and emergent economies. The gap between the rich and the poor continued to widen to an unprecedented degree. This transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich was carried out not only nationally, but also internationally. The end of the Cold War was certainly not unrelated to such an economic development. Unable to keep up with the joined forces of the Western capital, the Soviet Union and its satellite states collapsed around 1990. What the end of the Cold War brought about was twofold: the paradigmatic change in the political economy of the world and the realignment of the Third World nations. First, the structure of the modern nation-state that had long constituted the basis for capitalism, colonialism, and social organization was abruptly found to be superfluous and out of date. While the East-West rivalry lasted, the state needed the cohesiveness of people as a reliable military resource for protection or aggression; likewise, the rich in control of the state needed people as a dependable source of labor for greater accumulation of their wealth. The state, in short, needed the nation. Once the Cold War was over and the world became a potentially seamless economic field, however, the huge multinational corporations could transfer their capital, labor, technology, factory, market, and products to any place as long as it was more efficient and profitable. With the astonishing advances in transport and communication technology, the transfer was as efficient as it was inexpensive. For corporations the national boundary was an impediment; they needed the freedom to range over unbounded space. They found cheap labor abroad, and by the use of robotics and digital technology blocked the labor movements as well as lowered wages; when they needed skilled labor from abroad, on the other hand, they demanded and usually received cooperation from both home and host governments; they also transferred their operation to where the corporate taxes were lower, extracting tax concessions not only from foreign governments but also their own municipal, state, and federal governments. The corporations in short curbed the regulatory power of the states, but made use of them whenever it was to their advantage. Despite the conservative propaganda, the capitalist government did not end subsidies, but simply changed the beneficiaries from the indigent to the wealthy and corporate. The age of multinational corporatism thus began.

Second, for the duration of the Cold War, both the Western and Eastern blocs rivaled in forming an alliance with Third-World countries. One remembers the State Department strategies and CIA operations throughout the globe from Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the Far East, to South America. They chose whatever means available and expedient—through foreign aid, propaganda, bribes, covert violence, manipulated elections, or dispatch of marines, naval fleets, bombers and missiles. That is, as long as the Cold War lasted, the impoverished non-aligned countries could manipulate the Soviet and the U.S. to receive some funding. Although most of the billions of dollars poured out in these years merely served to enrich dictators like Mobutu Seco Seco, Marcos, Suharto, the Saudi or Kuwait sultans, and General Pinochet—the list was endless just as the transgression and stupidity of the State Department and CIA were infinite—there were some trickles that eventually reached the poor in these areas. With the end of the Cold War, however, even this meager beneficence was stopped. Private corporations have no interest whatever to help the poor: they are under fiduciary obligations to make profits. They would consider it their duty to write off sub-Sahara Africa as unprofitable and therefore useless and absent. Even when some 25% of the youth in these countries are dying of AIDS, the pharmaceutical companies will not make drugs available to them. Less than 2 % of the world capital now flows through the sub-Sahara Africa—except the Union of South Africa. Genocide draws no attention, when private corporations perpetrate it.

The gap between the rich and poor has existed throughout history. But the proportion of the difference was far smaller between nations, as has already been mentioned. The per capita GDP of the richest Switzerland and the poorest Myanmar in 1999 are \$43,060 and \$100, the ration of 430 to 1. And this proportion is not as sharp as the annual income of the average CEO to the blue-collar worker in the United States, 475 to 1 as of the spring 2000. The point here is not just the immensity of the unequal distribution of wealth itself, although it is important enough. Rather the gap between the few super rich and the vast majority of humanity separates them as if they had nothing in common. That is, the rich of the world have more to share with each other across national borders, or even across the East-West divide, than most of their fellow citizens. The world is sectioned into nations and nationalities only for those who cannot afford to move or travel beyond their home countries. For the rich, the world is indeed transnational and borderless.

What is most important in the world trade now is not in the form of manufactured goods, but speculative currencies, bonds, and derivatives to the tune of one trillion dollars or more a day. With the sophisticated digital technology, the transfer of financial capital is easy, fast, and cheap. Thus, as of now there is no mechanism for any state or its central bank to monitor, not to say control, such an immense transnational flow. As the nation-state becomes increasingly unfunctional and meaningless, those in charge of mapping the world are also discarding various social constructions, invented for nurturing the unified nation-state. For the remainder of this paper, I would like to consider the impact of the decline of the nation-state and the advance of so-called globalization on culture and the literary discourse.



#### 4 Toward an Inclusive Totality

Earlier in the second half of the twentieth century, the logic of difference was a strategy of liberation. Structuralist and poststructuralist thoughts that began in the late 60s in France gained far more popularity in the United States in these twenty years. This development is in itself quite fascinating, although there is no space for a full discussion in this paper. It is in order here, however, to point out some of the issues involved in the state of comparative literary studies. The rejection of the nation-state as totalizing implies the existence of more particularistic social units. In an immigrant and multiracial country such as the United States and Australia, multiculturalism is an obvious consensual choice, each minority group demanding its own autonomous and independent, that is, incommensurable space. Without doubt multiculturalism is preferable to the monoculturalist oppression of the minorities by the dominant group. The logic of difference, however, paradoxically poses three internal difficulties that are likely to perpetuate the condition of exclusion and neglect for the minorities.

First, insofar as each group's incommensurability means total uniqueness, the affairs of any given group are a matter that does not—or should not—concern the member of any other group. If this principle of non-interference is literally practiced, the minority—presumably less resourceful—groups must be left alone on their own shift. The majority group now has neither accountability nor responsibility for the minority groups. Second, the problem of totality does not vanish when a nation is divided up into ethnic or gender groups. Each group of course constitutes a smaller, but nonetheless as controlling and demanding a totality as the nation. How about, for instance, the minority called Asian American? Shouldn't that general and abstract entity be broken down into Chinese-American, Korean-American, Vietnamese-American, and many other subgroups? But then how about the Chinese-Americans? Are the Mainland Chinese to be considered in the same category as the Taiwanese? The Hong-Kong Chinese? Overseas Chinese? Women? Gays? Lesbians? Queers? And classes? Where does the logic of difference stop? Doesn't a particular individual remain as unrepresented as a citizen of a nation?

Third, among the three categories of difference (race, gender, and class), class is distinct from the other two in that class has no reason to retain its identity if liberated, whereas race and gender have no reason to lose theirs. Race and gender are thus more authentic identities than class that aspires to erase itself. In the identity politics that has consumed literary studies in recent years, this distinction among the three categories is tacitly assumed—with the result that class is seldom mentioned unlike ethnicity and gender. Quite obviously, the ruling class welcomes this silence on class. In this respect alone, multiculturalism has every reason to be warmly embraced by transnational corporatism.

If every literary and cultural system is incommensurable, the idea of “comparative” literature is an oxymoron. Incomparables cannot be compared. In fact, very little work is being done now in the area of comparing national or regional literatures. Such efforts are being supplanted by the studies of inner workings of a culture or literature, which presumably are different from those of another. Power as the constitutive factor, however, is nearly always introduced—with the effect of casting every ethnic or gender minority in a more or less similar light, for instance, of victimology.

The problem with the logic of difference is not just classificatory. In asserting autonomy and independence, each group—whatever that may be—declares independence, rejecting final commonality with others. Internal cohesiveness is then demanded, but this need for solidarity is functionally at least as disciplinarian as any national demand of loyalty and patriotism. And where does the authority of each group originate? How is the right to power and representation legitimized? Even the parliamentary democracy will have to be rejected here, since the elective representation requires the definition of an electorate, a totality. The minority leadership in this sense is likely to be based on self-proclamation, opening a way to opportunism and confusion. If sectionalism and secession are freely allowed, on the other hand, the social structure of a minority group will collapse to atomism. The literary discourse can also be splintered by factionalism, as recently pointed out by Nina Auerback in the London Review of Books (6 July 2000) and Anthony Appiah in The New York Review of Books regarding feminist studies now. Such a situation in fact only encourages the usurpation of power by an opportunist within the group who knows how to represent the atomized multiplicity by manipulating sympathy and loyalty. Also it finally serves the leaders of the dominant group who can pursue their own interest with no regard for the minorities, just as they had always done before the days of liberation.

The disintegration of not just comparative literature, but literary studies as a whole may very well be already under way. If the fractionalized groups are engrossed in their self-interests, outsiders have a good reason to feel repulsed by academia. They are excluded and unwanted, as long as they refuse to become partisans. And as we have already seen, they seem increasingly to look elsewhere for cultural interpretation and criticism. Literary productions—novels, plays, and poetry—are at present still very alive, but they are no longer closely connected with the critical and analytic segments of the university. My interest here is, however, not in recuperation or resuscitation of my professional specialization. Rather, I am concerned with restoring the sense of totality to the academic and intellectual world, both intellectually and politically. Particularity without totality is, by now we know, nonsense, deadening, and useless. As the so-called “globalization” goes ahead full-speed, literary scholars are absorbed in joyless self-isolation and futile in-fights. Literary and cultural critics must look out at the world and interconnect all the workings of political economy and artistic and cultural productions. We must keep reminding ourselves that the “global” economy is not global at all, but an exclusionist economy. We must recover the sense of true totality that includes everyone in the world.

For this purpose, the return to the nation-state probably will not work any more. The old power structure has proven a failure much too often in the past two centuries of its history. Perhaps we need a new organization, one that is truly global and inclusive of all relations now in progress. There is one such core site for inclusiveness, though entirely negative at present: that is, the future of the global environment. For the first time in human history, one single commonality involves all of the living on the planet, the environmental disintegration of the planet as a result of the human consumption of natural resources. Whether rich or poor, in the East or the West, progressive or conservative, religious or atheist, none of us can escape from the all-involving process of air pollution, ozone layer depletion, ocean contamination, toxic accumulation, and global warming. We can start from the realization of this total commonality as we map out our

world and engage in research and scholarship. Literature and literary studies now have one basis and goal: to nurture our common bonds to the planet. To replace the imaginaries of exclusionist familialism, communitarianism, nationhood, regionalism, "globalization," or even humanism, with the ideal of planetarianism. Once we accept the planet-based totality, we might for once agree with humility to devise a way to share with all the rest our only true public space and resources.

Of course, we may very well fail in this attempt, too. But if we do, we will not be there to see it. And perhaps we deserve to perish. On the other hand, faced with the fate of universally inescapable destruction and nullification, who knows, we may yet find a way to confront it, and find along the way to coexist with all others. There is at least that much promise of hope, the only hope we have been allowed to entertain together with everybody else on this planet.